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**COVID Checklist for ME Elections**  
**Guidance for In-person Voting on Election Day**  
*Developed in Consultation between the Secretary of State and MECDC, June 2020*

Group gatherings such as elections bring people from multiple households into close contact with each other and have the potential to increase COVID-19 transmission. The primary tools to control the spread of COVID-19 are to reduce exposure to respiratory droplets through physical distancing and face coverings, increase hand hygiene, and avoid shared items and common touch surfaces. The goal of this guidance is to protect voters, poll workers, and the local community from COVID-19 infection.

**General Guidance**

*Maintaining physical distancing of 6 feet and wearing face coverings are the primary tools to avoid transmission of respiratory droplets between individuals.*

1. Require all individuals to maintain 6 feet of physical distance from individuals who are not part of their household group whenever possible.
2. Municipal clerks should evaluate the space available in their voting locations and determine the number of individuals that can safely enter while maintaining physical distance. The number of individuals that can gather in a shared space must not exceed the limit established by the Governor's Executive Order. Per the Governor's plan for Restarting Maine's Economy, it is anticipated that at the time of the election the gathering limit will be 50 people. Count both workers and voters toward the gathering limit.
  - a. If an indoor space cannot accommodate the gathering limit without complying with the 6-foot distancing requirement, occupancy must be limited to allow for such compliance.
  - b. The gathering limit applies to each separate area in the building. For example, 50 physically distanced individuals could be in a voting room while an additional 50 physically distanced individuals are in a queuing area.
3. Require individuals to wear a face covering where physical distancing is difficult to maintain, per CDC recommendations and Executive Order from the Office of the Governor. Voters should be strongly encouraged to wear face coverings but cannot be turned away from voting for not doing so.
  - a. Because workers will be working in an indoor space for a prolonged period, and interacting with individuals outside of their household group, workers should wear a face covering at all times, even when physically distanced.
  - b. Providing face shields for workers is strongly encouraged, to be worn in addition to or in place of a face covering.
  - c. Face masks should be replaced once visibly wet or soiled.
  - d. Additional information about proper use of face coverings is available from the CDC (see: [Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19](#)).

## Workers

1. Workers should consider whether they can work safely if they have any of these conditions and municipal clerks should discuss potential risks for individuals with the following:
  - a. People 65 or older
  - b. People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled including:
    - i. People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
    - ii. People who have serious heart conditions
    - iii. People who are immunocompromised: Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications
    - iv. People with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)
    - v. People with diabetes
    - vi. People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
    - vii. People with liver disease
2. Workers should stay at home if they are sick. Municipal officials should ask all workers to self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms using either of the following approaches:
  - a. Use an electronic or app-based self-screening form, such as the Coronavirus Self-Checker available on the [federal CDC's homepage](#).
  - b. Self-screen using the following questions:
    - i. Have you had a cough or sore throat?
    - ii. Have you had a fever, or do you feel feverish?
    - iii. Do you have shortness of breath?
    - iv. Do you have loss of taste or smell?
    - v. Have you been around anyone exhibiting these symptoms within the past 14 days?
    - vi. Are you living with anyone who is sick or quarantined?
    - vii. Have you been out of the state in the last 14 days?
3. Adjust training practices to limit number of people involved and allow for 6 foot spacing; use virtual/video/audio training when possible.
4. Provide workers training on:
  - a. hand hygiene
  - b. physical distancing guidelines and expectations
  - c. monitoring personal health
  - d. proper wear, removal, and disposal of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
  - e. cleaning protocols, including how to safely and effectively use cleaning supplies: [Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools and Homes](#) (CDC)
5. Consider worker training in safe de-escalation techniques.
6. Encourage workers to practice good hand hygiene and wash hands frequently, especially after contact with individuals and high-touch surfaces. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
  - a. The CDC recommends wearing gloves when you are cleaning or caring for someone who is sick. In most other situations, wearing gloves is not necessary. Instead, practice good hand hygiene.

## Building and Operational Considerations

1. Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans to exhaust air from indoor spaces, and other methods. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk.
2. Take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (for example, drinking fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of disease. Further guidance is available from the CDC (see: [Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation](#) (CDC)).
3. Consider restricting the use of water fountains to refill only with instruction for individuals to wash hands after use.
4. Ensure that there is a garbage can upon exit of the polling location, for safe disposal of any gloves, masks, or tissues. Develop a plan to safely empty the garbage can periodically.
5. Consider installing non-porous physical barriers such as partitions or Plexiglass barriers to protect workers and voters. Barriers should be placed at check-in tables, voter registration tables, and other similar locations where it is difficult to maintain a minimum of 6 feet of physical distance.
6. Limit activities that require staff and/or visitors to enter within 6 feet of another person, regardless of whether physical barriers are installed.
7. Inform voters of your COVID-19 policies and procedures in advance, if possible, via website, newsletters, social media channels, newspaper, etc.
8. Place signage at entrances and throughout building (particularly high traffic areas such as check-in tables) alerting workers and voters to required occupancy limits, physical distancing requirements, and face covering policies.
9. Ensure that doors are propped open, as applicable, so voters do not have to touch door handles. Do not prop open doors if doing so poses a safety risk.
10. Eliminate lines to the greatest extent practicable. Where lines are unavoidable, ensure 6 feet of distance between individuals. This can be accomplished by demarcating 6-foot distances on floors or walls. When developing a plan for managing lines, consider the various locations where lines may form, including check-in tables, voter registration areas, ballot boxes, and ballot scanning machines.
11. Modify building traffic flow to minimize contact between individuals. Use floor decals and/or signage to establish travel patterns.
  - a. Consider establishing a one-way travel pattern.
  - b. Consider one-way entrances and exits.
  - c. Minimize traffic in enclosed spaces, such as elevators and stairwells and other spaces that do not allow for appropriate physical distancing. Consider limiting the number of individuals in an elevator at one time and designating one directional stairwells.
12. Avoid congregation at petition tables and ensure that petitioners allow for physical distancing with exiting voters.
13. To comply with physical distancing policies, reconfigure polling locations to allow for 6 feet of distance between polling booths. Direct voters to booths that are physically distanced from one another and/or use signage or physical barriers to prevent use of every other booth.
14. Remove curtains from voting booths to minimize shared touch points.
15. Ensure adequate supplies (e.g., soap, paper towels, hand sanitizer, tissue) to support healthy hygiene practices and increased cleaning and disinfection procedures.
16. Provide an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for use before entering the polling site and after using the voting machine or the final step in the voting process. Consider placing the alcohol-based hand sanitizer in visible, frequently used locations such as check-in desks and exits.

17. Practice routine, at least hourly, cleaning of frequently touched surfaces including tables, handles, voting booths, touchscreens, etc.
18. To minimize shared touch surfaces, provide voters with disposable pens, where possible. The disposable pens should not be left in the voting booth after use. Consider having voters take pens home or deposit pens in a box after voting for cleaning, disinfection, and reuse.
19. Discourage voters, workers, candidates, and surrogates from greeting others with physical contact (e.g., handshakes). Remind candidates and surrogates to maintain 6 feet of physical distance from voters, as well as other candidates and surrogates.
20. In the interest of minimizing contact between individuals, if stickers are distributed, avoid methods that involve hand-to-hand contact or create high-touch areas, such as bowls.
21. Ensure that staffing is sufficient to enable compliance with guidelines. Consider assigning the following responsibilities to workers to ensure compliance:
  - a. Line control worker: Remind voters in line to maintain 6 feet of distance; offer masks to voters without face coverings, if available.
  - b. Door control worker: Regulate the number of people allowed in voting area to comply with gathering limit requirements.
  - c. Cleaning and disinfection worker: Clean and disinfect frequently touched surface including tables, handles, voting booths, etc.
  - d. Crowd control worker: Direct voters to available voting booths.

## **Cleaning and Disinfection**

1. Refer to the following documents for guidance on general cleaning and disinfection:
  - a. [COVID-19 Prevention Checklist General Guidance](#) (State of Maine)
  - b. [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#) (CDC)
  - c. [Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools and Homes](#) (CDC)
2. Refer to guidance from the Secretary of State regarding the specific procedures you should follow to clean and sanitize voting system equipment.

## **Restrooms**

1. Limit restroom occupancy for group restrooms to incorporate physical distancing and avoid formation of waiting lines outside of restrooms.
2. Work with facility owners to ensure restrooms at the polling station are supplied adequately with soap, water and drying materials.
3. Work with facility owners to ensure that restrooms are cleaned and disinfected on a regular and scheduled basis (see General Cleaning and Disinfecting section)
4. Work with facility owners to remove any items that do not have to be in the restrooms (e.g., magazines, decor).
5. Consider establishing separate restrooms for workers and voters.
6. Post handwashing signs in all restrooms.